

THE DIAMOND CIPHER

A BASEBALL ROMANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Secret Service Chief Wilkins, puzzled over the theft of the Government's cipher, calls to his aid Detective Pinkwell. They think they have discovered a new cipher, when the office boy, Brockett, tells them it's "The Diamond Cipher" and starts for the ball park.

CHAPTER II—Brockett, Chula, Lon Kan, a Siamese, Ramon Solano, a Cuban, together with some twenty other youngsters practice baseball playing until dark. One of Wilkins' stenographers is seen to pass a paper to mysterious stranger.

CHAPTER III—As outcome of Brockett's cipher, the ball player and Solano are engaged by government for mysterious mission. Yuzimoto, mysterious Jap, calls on Brockett.

CHAPTER IV—Brockett falls into Yuzimoto's trap, a fight follows, Brockett coming out on top; Messenger McKane coming to rescue.

CHAPTER V—McKane was bearer of the mysterious cipher; is also a ball player.

CHAPTER VI—Yuzimoto returns to headquarters and reports his failure to obtain the cipher to Baron Zollern; Miss Lawson, the stenographer, also reports to the Baron.

CHAPTER VII—Brockett and Solano have encounter with the Baron in which the latter comes out second best.

CHAPTER VIII—Brockett and Solano arrive in Jersey City; make appointment to meet McGinnity, the "Iron Man," baseball manager.

CHAPTER IX—Brockett and Solano arrive in New York and run into a Chinese Tong war; rescued by a white man.

CHAPTER X—The place of refuge found to be a trap; find themselves prisoners of Yuzimoto. Kelly to rescue, mauls Jap out of \$10,000.

CHAPTER XI—Kelly turns the money over to Brockett.

CHAPTER XII—Brockett and Solano have encounter with tough gang, but are protected by Kelly's men.

CHAPTER XIII—On sleeper Cleveland-bound; the Baron detected in act of rifling Solano's berth, jumps from train.

CHAPTER XII.

The spoils of war having been carefully put away, and the escort of four gangsters notified of their duties, Brockett and Solano started on the devious journey that was to cover so large a portion of North America before it could be satisfactorily completed—a longer trip, in fact, than the youngsters had anticipated, and even more replete with excitement and adventure than they had expected. Kelly, frankly cordial and evidently wholly honest in his intentions, introduced them to the precious four who were to see them safely out of Manhattan. The gang leader's instructions to his legionaries were short, simple and easily understood.

"These two lads," quoth Mr. Kelly, "are right people. The best ever, be-



lieve me, and I want you four to look out for them till they are over in Jersey. If anybody tries to get to them, it'll be a bunch of Japs. Keep cool, watch close, and anytime a slant-eyed monk tries to get gay, just trim him. If you have to use your gats, why use 'em—it will be all right, and there's somebody higher up than me that will see you don't get none the worst of it. Remember, now—keep headed for yel-

low men, and don't be nowise slow if you have to get some of 'em."

Brockett and Solano had quickly decided that the Christopher street ferry should take them back to the Jersey side, figuring out this plan of action on the theory that their tireless enemies would hardly expect them to double back upon their tracks. "In all probability," argued Solano, "they will be counting on our going either north, towards Albany, or east towards Boston, and we can simply alter one small section of our route to fit the exigencies of the case."

"We will have to cut out a few of the turns and bends we had mapped out," said Brockett, "or the delay we have just been through may hold us back considerably. Once back on the



Jersey side, we can hurry right along. We still have a fair margin of time ahead of us, but we can't waste many hours."

The escort provided by the friendly Kelly strolled along with the boys for a block or so, pointing out places of interest and showing every evidence of good humor. As the little group turned into Park Row, one of the escorting four whispered in Brockett's ear, briefly, admonishingly:

"You two fellows walk ahead—'bout fifty feet or so. We'll come along back of you as if we didn't know you. If anybody's laying for you along here we can pretty near get 'em that way."

And, like a quartet of well-trained soldiers, the gangsters dropped back till perhaps twenty paces separated them from their charges. Brockett and Solano, willing to accept the judgment of the gang-youths in such affairs, walked along, gazing into the windows of the ancient pawnshops, scrutinizing the tide of riffraff and human flotsam that came ebbing to and fro, and in general conducting themselves after the fashion of verdant greens just seeing New York by archlight.

The huge, gloomy shadows of Brooklyn bridge loomed ahead, and the surge of mixed humanity was thicker and more diversified than ever, when half a dozen young men, rat-faced, weasel-eyed, slinking amid the darker places like wolves along the edge of the forest, came softly out from the blackness that surrounds the great pillars of the "L" road. One of them, a stocky fellow with a gray cap pulled well down upon his forehead, stumbled against Solano, and, regaining his balance with a quick spring of his nimble legs, caught the Cuban by the arm.

"Say, young feller, whatchu mean by shovin' people around, anyhow? Can't you see where you are goin'?"

Solano shook off the detaining hand, and Brockett closed up beside him. The pack of rat-faced young men seemed to spring up around them like ambushed Indians, and the trap was as neatly sprung as ever a savage planned an ambush. The next second there came the quick patter of feet from the rear; four more rat-faced, furtive-eyed young men had mingled with the attacking half-dozen, and the whole ten were exchanging amicable greetings.

"Just keep off these two guys, just let 'em be," explained one of the escorting four.

"Friends of yours, Casey?" queried the apparent leader of the newcomers. "Friends of Kelly's, Ike. He told us to see that they got to any place they might choose to go."

"The deuce you say! All right, if youse ducks says so. Tell Kelly you seen us, and we sent him our best regards."

"Sure thing, Ike. So long. See you later, maybe."

The recent assailants faded into the darkness of the "L" shadows as strangely as they came, and the quartet of protecting gangsters resumed the journey.

"Good thing we went with you fellows," exulted the chief of the protective squad. "Those gorillas would have fixed you sure."

"So I should judge," admitted Solano. "We would have given them

some fight, at that, but six against two would have been a little too strong. Are they part of your own crowd?"

"Nix, not in a hundred. They're the Five Points, do you see? And we are

Eastmans. Right now, we're all good friends—best on earth. Kelly's an Eastman, and a topnotcher, too, but the Five Points all like him—honest they do—and they wouldn't do nothing to no pals of his, not for any money. Must have been the Japs Kelly tipped us off about—they must have seen this gang and fixed it with them to hold you up. In that case, the poor Japs gets double-crossed two times in the same place. It's a cinch those gorillas wouldn't take on nothing like that unless they got the kale in advance, and we know what Kelly did to the one that was fixing to have you sloughed a little while ago."

"Any chance for any more excitement?" asked Brockett, as the expedition passed the bridge entrance and then began a new tack that would lead them to the ferry.

The gangsters were uncertain. "Not much show for anything with any gangs," explained their leader, "but if the Jap gicks are as wild as they seem to get you, there may be something doing. Pretty mean people, those Japs. They'll hang on forever in hopes of getting an even break with anyone they're after. Tell you what—Kelly didn't tell us to go any farther than the ferry, but we'll see you get safe to Jersey, anyhow. Might be some doings on the ferry, you know."

The little squad went through various devious wanderings and doublings during the rest of the route to the Christopher street ferry, pursuing a tortuous course that evoked expressions of admiration from the disciples of Monk Eastman. "You fellows are pretty wise, all right," commented the chief of the escort. "It would take a good fly-mug to trail you, and if the Japs can keep track of your smoky they'll have to go some. Honest, we'd like to go the route with you two, but the best we can do is to back-track and beat it across again on the ferry just as quick as we see you landed. Some of us is entirely too popular in Jersey. They'd like to keep us there for a long time, they like us so much over there."

As the lights of the ferry came in sight the gang chief called a sudden halt. "Seems to me," was his sage observation—the remark of an able general—"that if those Japs have anything coming at all it'll be pulled on the boat, and the same plan as we worked in Park Row ought to be a winner. You two go on ahead and board the boat just a bit in front of us. We'll all be right on the job, and if anything happens some of those yellow boys will have a smoky go-out. That all right? Sure it is. Now beat it along and leave the rest to us."

Brockett and Solano had by this time learned to trust implicitly in the rat-faced and slinking members of the Eastman gang. They were upon the big ferryboat scarcely five seconds ahead of the departure signals, and, as they sought the bow of the clumsy old vessel, they could see no sign of their faithful escort in the midnight crowd of home-seeking Jersejans. Nevertheless, there was the pleasant feeling that the gangsters were still with them—somewhere within hearing and striking distance—and it was a cheering thought to realize that the subtlest enemy, against such rough fighters of the dark, could inflict but little injury.

The lights of the city were dancing on the black waters of the North river when from the forepart of the cabin rose a shrill cry of surprise and horror. Then another cry, this time of pain and despair. There was a rush of feet, a tussling amid a knot of men, and the next moment two little fellows, finely dressed, and, as the cabin lights fell upon their faces, showing



the unmistakable features of the Oriental, were jammed up against the side-rails of the boat. For one instant the light shone upon the frenzied brown visages, and the boys caught one recognizing glimpse of Mr. Yuzimoto. Then the lights of the boat went out; utter blackness shrouded

the huge floating structure, and there was a splash, a gurgling yell, and another splash beside the boat. The lights flared up again, and the gang leader stood beside Brockett, cool, unruffled, smiling affably.

"Good thing Hogan knew where to find the electric switch," he said, pleasantly. "He worked on one of these boats last summer, and he knows where they keep everything. Your Jap friend is pretty wet by now, I'm thinking. We made 'em just in time. They had you spotted and was just slipping up to hand you something."

On the big boat men were running and bellowing hoarsely. Brockett and Solano heard the uproar, and gazed out across the silent waters of the North river, while the members of the Eastman gang, as unshaken and disinterested as the most innocent member of the throng, were idly standing near them. Somewhere out among the wash of the tide two men were fighting for their lives, or, perchance, had already sought the bottom—but there was nothing to be seen from the rail of the ferry-boat, and the North river was keeping its newest secret well.

CHAPTER XIII.

Manhattan, the Hudson, and the exciting scenes of the previous day were far behind. The adventurers were rolling west upon a rapid train, planning details as they went, and reviewing their recent adventures with much perplexity. Most bewildering circumstance of all was the way in which Mr. Yuzimoto seemed to have kept track of their movements, and the persistency with which he had turned up at every inconvenient hour.

"You have to give credit to the Jap," remarked Solano. "He was game, he took long chances, and Sherlock Holmes never had anything on him when it came to following a clue. I'm almost sorry that he's in the river."

"Always provided that he is," murmured Brockett, doubtfully. "Somehow or other I can't believe that we've seen the last of him. I'd wager



something—if I ever gambled—that he came safe ashore, and is after us again."

"I hardly think so," said the Cuban. "Our friends of the Eastman gang settled him for keeps, and his partner with him. What I can't understand is the way they attended to him without interference or trouble. They put him overboard without any of the other passengers cutting in to stop them, and they all got away without being bothered by the police. I can't admire their lives or their principles, but we owe a great deal to them."

"We may have a chance to pay them back some time—at least, I hope so," Brockett commented.

"If not one way, we will another," said Solano. "After this trip is over—if we get back with our heads and skins—I'm going to visit New York, call on Mr. Kelly and invite the whole Eastman gang to a banquet at my expense. What they have done for us was well worth it, wasn't it?"

The train pulled into Pittsburg towards noon, and the youngsters disembarked. They had decided to turn their route to Cleveland, then to Detroit, and thence across Michigan to Chicago, changing railroads at each city. A night train to Cleveland was selected for the next trip, and the boys put in the afternoon in the justly celebrated city of steel, shipping and eccentric millionaires. A glance at a baseball schedule showed them that Pittsburg was playing at home during the afternoon—a circumstance which settled their whereabouts for the greater portion of the day. It had never been the fortune of either boy to see Hans Wagner, and the chance was one that was not to be resisted. Even with the anticipation of a glimpse at Wagner to lure them on, Brockett and Solano did not lose their caution. Instead of going straight to Forbes field, home of the Pittsburg team, they started in the opposite direction, circled here and there among the busy streets for an hour, lunched in a restaurant with entrances on two

different streets, and departed by the door through which they didn't come when they first went in. Then they separated, went 'round opposite sides of a block, and rejoined each other on a side street, so clear of traffic that they could easily have spotted anyone following or shadowing the movements of either one. The trip to Forbes field was then in order, and the youngsters worshipped at the shrine of the great German shortstop for two delirious hours. When the mighty Honus, in the tenth inning, put his weight against a fast ball and drove it over the middle wall for the home run that won the game, no native Pittsburger could have created more noise or come nearer an actual delirium than Brockett and Solano.

The early evening hours were spent in pretty continual motion, and the boys were well fagged out when they betook themselves to a Pullman car, Cleveland-bound. They had decided to take two berths, upper and lower, with Solano sleeping in the lower berth, while Brockett, with the jealously guarded letters and cipher keys, would mount on high, beyond the reach of a possible pilferer. The good-natured negro in charge of the car made up their couches without delay, and then went to the platform to receive belated travelers, arriving barely in time to swing aboard the train.

As Solano was tossing off his shoes, and Brockett loosening his tie, the train cleared the Pittsburg station, gathering speed and whizzing along on its northwestern way. The porter came grinning up to the berth where the boys were preparing for much-needed sleep, and handed a small, square envelope to Brockett.

"Geman in de crowd done gib me dis," he explained. "Said to hand it to de young men in upper and lower neben as soon as de train was under way, so heah it am."

"Gentleman in the crowd?" echoed Brockett. "Why—what—what sort of looking man was he?"

The negro grinned and shook his head.

"Couldn't factly tell you, suh. Dere was three or four people climbin' aboard de cab, an' Ah was so busy Ah habbly noticed anyone in paticulah. Jest took it soht ob mechanical, suh, soht ob mechanical, an' Ah neveh did see de pusion."

Solano turned on the electric bulb in the lower berth. They drew the green curtains tight, and Brockett opened the envelope. It contained only a square white card, and across the card was written, in the diamond cipher, these letterings:

"R 3BH pos E 2BH SH W TC Fin To SH Pos To C O B B AB SH BB Pos To R 3BH SB Fin PO."

"Meaning," Brockett translated, "change route at Detroit. Be watchful."

"Meaning also," said Solano, "that even if we have evaded our pet enemies we have not passed from the sight of the secret service chief. I take off my bonnet to him and to his people."

The humming motion of the wheels had soothed both boys to sleep, and Brockett was dreaming of a baseball partnership with Hans Wagner and Christy Mathewson, when the sound of an angry altercation woke him with a start. Peering down from his elevated perch, he made out the stocky form of the porter, and beside him the figure of a man in pajamas, who was expostulating earnestly.

"Ah'm sorry, suh," cried the negro, "but Ah distinctly saw yo' reach into dis berth and paw all around. Yo' beht is way up de cab, and on de otheh side. Whaffo' yo' come fustin' round dis geman's beht, anyhow?"

Solano's head protruded from the curtains at this moment, while Brockett thrust down a leg preparatory to descending. The pajama-clad man struggled to shake off the negro's detaining clutch, and protested hissing in a German accent.

"Bortor, you vas mistook. I vos coming from de vashroom, ven de train it lurch and upset me from mein balance. I dake holdt off de bert to steady meinself, and dot vas all. Vot right haf you to insuld a respectable cafeler in dis vay?"

The negro was not to be blarneyed. "Ah saw yo' rummagin' roun' in dat beht fo' five minutes befo' Ah stopped yo', an' yo' neveh needed no sech time as dat jest fo' to get yo' balance. Oh, deke yo' is, suh. Is dehe anything missin' from you beht, suh?"

Solano rapidly inspected his clothing. "Two pockets turned inside out," he announced, "but nothing taken. You've got a cheap railway thief there, George. Hold him tight, and the car company won't forget you."

Brockett, descending lightly from his berth, peered into the face of the pajama-clad captive.

"Glad to see you, sir," laughed the boy, exultingly. "We met in Washington only the other day, if I am not mistaken."

To be continued

Rubber Dust in New York. An analysis shows that 12 per cent. of the street dust in New York city is pulverized rubber.